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# CHILD WELFARE

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# SOME DETERMINANTS IN THE DIFFERENTIAL TREATMENT OF ADOLESCENTS\*

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*This paper deals with the particular ways in which casework is appropriately concerned with the reorganization of the personality of the adolescent.*

RECENTLY a long, lanky, lug of an adolescent boy was extolling the virtues of social casework and what it had done for him. He explained by saying, "I'm no longer on the defensive! Last night I went to my first dance and the only thing I knew about dancing was that you put your feet together and stand until the rhythm gets you, then move. I tried it and when I stepped on my girl's feet I didn't say, 'Sorry.' I just said, 'What's the matter, Honey, don't you know this step?' I figure that I've changed a lot, why I used to be a defensive character, but now I'm an offensive personality."

What this boy stated in his own way is probably the key problem of most adolescents, that of being defensive and feeling unable to become a person in one's own right, ready to face the world with belief in one's whole being. Teen-agers get rudely awakened to the fact that their future success or failure will be strongly influenced by their adequacy as a man or woman and all of them need some help in attaining this adequacy. That help is found in some parents and some friends but sometimes it needs to be provided by professional sources.

## The Caseworker's Role

When the social caseworker starts to help meet the needs of the adolescent, he assumes a kind of professional responsibility that differs somewhat from that essential to work with individuals in different age categories. A large part of this difference is in the nature of the relationship he builds. Any meaningful relationship established with a member of the teen-agers will affect basic personality change and development, necessarily taking on special psychotherapeutic elements. The worker must offer himself as a nucleus of identification and thus serve as one source for the kind of personal identification, so important to this age. Included in the casework relationships are concern with the broader aspects of the adolescent's everyday life.

The casework relationship may in itself serve as an experience through which the adolescent first begins to feel adequate. Once this feeling is experienced in

this one-to-one contact, he will feel freer to test his adequacy in other areas. He must first be helped to understand that it is his "right" to be adequate, which means to be mature and take his or her sex role in the larger world. Most adolescents who come for help are unsure of this "right." Part of this understanding will result from their being accepted and treated as a maturing person by the worker. They must be convinced that the worker wants to and will help them grow up, caring what happens to them in the process, by protecting them while they grow, but not from growing.

When the adolescent is helped to know that what the worker wants for him is identical to what he wants for himself, then his need for any psychological resistances can be broken down and he can consider with the worker exactly what it is that he does want and move toward getting this. Many parents of teen-agers speak a truism when they say "adolescents don't know what they want in life." The thing they want most is maturity and all it brings, but those who have never been made to feel their right to this are afraid to want it. The adage that "It is easier to know what you want when you are sure you can get it" applies here. Once this "right" is determined, the adolescent can begin to understand and accept this changing self.

## Adolescence—a Period of Adjustments

Some of the restrictions the teen-ager might feel about growing up are culturally based.\* In our American society, quite a dichotomy exists between what is expected behavior in childhood and in adulthood. As examples:

The aggression needs of most American children are suppressed, and yet as adults, these same individuals are expected to function in our highly competitive and individualistic business and professional world, where aggression is essential to success. Authority over most American children teaches them that if they are to be considered "good" they must deny or prevent any obvious expression of sexuality and as physically mature adolescents they must still be sexless and celibate in their behavior, yet as adults they are expected to court, enter into marriages and then exercise guilt-free sexual prerogatives.

\* Presented at League's program, National Conference of Social Work, Atlantic City, April, 1950.

\* Weston LaBarre, "Demands Made Upon the Child by Present Day Culture," *Public Welfare News*, December, 1949.



Awakening to the fact that differing, sometimes even opposite, behavior is required for success as an adult in contrast to that required for success as a child, is a frightening thing and causes the teen-agers to question the reasonableness of the society adults have pictured for them. The excitement they feel within themselves, the temptations and impulses that overwhelm them at this age are a terrific threat to any established idealizations for behavior and make a forceful demand on the way they must behave in the future if they are to live personally satisfying lives. Some come to feel that in order to continue to be loved, they must remain as children.

Because of the unfortunate schism which our society creates between childhood and adulthood, the adolescent, in a brief span of time, needs to re-experience many of the steps taken in his early developmental stage, though in a different configuration. His erotic needs take on much of the same intensity that they had in infancy, except now he needs to love and be loved, not as a child, but as an adult. In his near-adulthood he finds less self or social tolerance of the primitive quality in these drives and he is therefore faced with a greater personal responsibility for handling them. He recognizes this responsibility as being "maturity," for which he is not quite prepared.

Almost a new reorganization of the unconscious "right and wrong" that he has incorporated within himself is necessary. This super ego of his begins to be altered in relation to the adult demands that he recognizes as being different from those of childhood. One part of the difference is a liberalization of previous demands and one part is more strict. Some differences are entirely new. He awakens to the fact that the demands and expectations of his parents do not always coincide with those of society and he again is faced with some new choice of behavior for himself that may not be in conformity with his original super-ego development.

A new phase of ego development and reorganization is necessitated in being adult. The irregularity in the pace at which each part of the person has developed is marked at adolescence. The sudden lunging ahead in physical development, against the possible lagging behind in mental or emotional growth, creates a pull and haul that makes the individual consciously aware of the inconsistencies within himself and causes him mistrust in his ability ever to get himself wholly together. This is illustrated by the comments of adolescents about their self-doubts. One boy refers to himself as feeling "like a man from Mars who just doesn't belong in this world." A fifteen-year-old girl talks of being "all mixed up and queer-like inside of me." These are expressions of a weak

ego and can prevent the teen-ager from having the courage to try out the adult world.

Inconsistencies are usually present in the segments of the ego itself. The youth may have a strong "physical ego" and feel entirely adequate in body. At the same time he may feel mentally inadequate. These self-feelings have either been initiated or re-enforced by external factors, principally those instigated by earlier authoritative figures. Illustrating these are the following excerpts from case records.

"My coach says I'm too damn dumb to play football and I guess I am,"

came from a one-hundred-and-sixty-five-pound adolescent hulk, who has an I.Q. of 147. A beautiful eighteen-year-old girl describes how

she looks in the mirror and thinks, "you ugly brain." Hers is an experience with a mother who tries to keep her unattractive by saying, "You'll never win a beauty prize" or, "Your looks will never catch a man" but at the same time giving her every encouragement for her intellectual development, as she wants her to become a physician.

The caseworker needs to determine what are the ego strengths and weaknesses of the individual and use the identification he is given plus any outside resources to strengthen the weakest areas. All adolescent ego is not entirely built from the inside out by "relationship therapy." A part can be the external support that is so essential in a materialistic society.

The meaning of clothing to the teen-ager can be very great, not necessarily the amount or the quality, but what is appropriate for this special age group at a given time. Being out of step with the fads and fancies of adolescent fashion can be a crushing blow to either male or female. Casework can do something about these and they are factors in the "make or break" of that shaky self-confidence. A part of the help offered in the providing of some of these necessary things is the worker's wanting the individual to have them.

In adolescence the basic personality change that needs to be made can be effected in some part by outside forces. For the child who is not mentally sick, this reorganization fortunately does not necessitate the giving of "deep insight." This leaves the responsibility for helping to bring it about appropriately in the hands of caseworkers and not necessarily psychotherapists. Insight for the adolescent can mean just knowing where he stands in relation to others. In the interview he will want to talk more about his day-by-day experiences, his feelings about people and how he thinks they feel about him. He feels that he has insight when he can be sure that he is understood and loved by some one person, for then he is "acceptable" and knowing this will allow him to accept himself as he is. This gives him a comfortable feeling that permits him to be able to begin testing his strengths with

his contemporaries and others in the world outside the casework setting. Little interpretation needs to be given the adolescent of the meanings of his relationship with the worker except as he consciously questions it. An awareness of the full meaning of the relationship could put a teen-ager in a panic, particularly the younger ones.

When the individual feels solidly secure in some facets of his adolescent experience, then he will want to show self-assertion in other areas. Unless some other qualified adult is in the picture, the caseworker will need to stand by the adolescent as he demonstrates self-assertion. This is partly a supportive role, which enables the adolescent to feel constant and consistent acceptance, while he dares to change. He can be sure that some one person will both want him to mature and allow him to mature. He will come to depend on this person to protect him from the unreasonable consequences of any mistakes he might make in his testing-out experience. These consequences may be "self-blame," or may very well be external factors, but especially it may be that most-feared consequence—some form of total rejection.

For some adolescents a "testing ground" can be provided by the worker. This might be the youth's own home where casework services to his family alter the situation for him, it might be some opportunity for group experience, or it can be his placement in a boarding home or institutional setting, depending on his needs. Whatever the setting, it must be therapeutically conditioned to help meet the immediate needs of the particular adolescent. The skills and the points of view of the individuals concerned with the teen-ager will be important factors in any change he can make for himself. The caseworker will need to keep fully aware of the wider implications of what he and the adolescent are doing together, avoiding any isolation from the continuing experiences he is having, and helping him keep an active relation to them.

### **Separation—Its Meaning to Adolescents**

One focal point in casework with every adolescent is that of separation from parent persons. This can mean the separation that is necessary intellectually and emotionally, or in addition, the actual physical separation by placement. The problem of becoming independent of the parental authority that has guided the individual through his developmental years plus the problem of developing those inner and outer strengths that make it possible to not only leave but live without that authority, is a big order for any human. Time is important in this and the process cannot be hurried. The intellectual and emotional components in separation necessarily continue after

placement. This makes it important for the caseworker to stand by and follow through the entire experience.

Actually, leaving the parent persons can be even more difficult for the adolescent than for a young child, as this move may be the final move away from home ties. This in itself can be threatening if the youth is not first helped to work through his ambivalence about breaking away. This feeling of finality to relationships that have been satisfying means the giving up of something that has been good and he knows that it can never be replaced. If the relationship has been unsatisfying, he gives up the chance of ever making it so. By the time he has reached adolescence he has experienced enough of life to know that any change can mean considerable personal readjustment on his part and he may well feel that he would rather "put up" with the familiar, desirable or not, than take a chance on the unknown. Leaving the parents can have a dire effect on the early adolescent, whose impulses and object relations in early years have become reanimated and the oedipal situation revived. Too often exasperated parents are willing to give them up without full realization of the implications in so doing. Careful preparation for the placement is important both to the parents being left and the teen-ager who is leaving. The degree of readiness and capacity to accept and make this change will greatly influence the success of the placement.

Determination of how an adolescent feels about parents or parent substitutes is important in helping to decide whether or not placement should be made away from the own home. The social case history is not a reliable source for determining the individual's emotional relationship with his parents. It may give some indication of how he probably should feel toward them, but little of how he does feel. As an example:

A long history of a child's having had what apparently is good and loving care would indicate, by all reason, that he should want to stay on with his parents, yet this very child is probably the one who can freely leave them. The child with a long history of having been mistreated and rejected may hold an unusual attachment to the injuring person or persons. Such an attachment might easily become intensified by any threat of having to leave them.

The adolescent may say that he wants to leave home without having the willingness or ability to do this. The worker must not act just on the expression of his "wanting," for in all probability he will become resistive to any effort to place him or will act as a passive recipient of service, surrendering his capacity to do anything about his own difficulties, thus assuming an infantile role rather than using placement as a maturing experience. If resistance to placement is met, the worker must remember that the adolescent

is especially capable of defeating any therapeutic plan for him. He may do this by taking the situation in his own hands and by running away from placement or he may do a masterful job of holding himself aloof and preventing anything positive from getting into his experience.

The following are verbatim extracts taken from tape recordings of interviews with an eighteen-year-old boy. These serve to illustrate the steps taken in the process of his getting ready to leave his neurotic mother, who had completely rejected him as a young child, sending him off to an institution to live out his childhood. When he was fourteen, she completely repossessed him, causing the two to become interlocked at an age that was precarious for him. Shortly after coming to the agency for help with what he called his "mother tie" this adolescent expresses his *desire* to leave her.

"I'm a muddled mess and can't make decisions, I have nothing to base them on. I don't know which direction I'm supposed to take or want to take." (As a result you really don't take any!) "That's right, every time I suggest a plan for doing something about it, it means an emotional blowup from my mother and I hardly know which direction to take so I am just bewildered and flounder around and sometimes I hurt her, then I cry because the situation isn't any better and I'm not happy, and if she knew I wasn't happy then she'd be all the more unhappy and I feel I can't find any solution for it and it makes the problem worse because I get afraid that I'll always be unhappy and it may never work out." (Do you think it will work out if you take a stand about leaving home?) "Well I don't know, I'm afraid if I take an abrupt stand—well, I'm afraid of the results on my mother. She's in such low health and mental condition and when she says she doesn't want to live I have to be careful, and at least give humane consideration to her, since she's been unhappy all her life and should have everything to make her happy, which in this case means my staying and living with her." (And giving yourself to her entirely?) "I don't want to do that and shouldn't do it."

With a lapse of five weeks and five interviews away, the following content was recorded, which shows the movement into a *willingness* to leave the mother:

"I've tried to talk it over with her a million times and she only cries and says she can't live without me. I've been thinking of myself, too, your seeing me helps me do this. I guess I've thought all along that she is the only important one, but I think I count too, and if I stay with her it will destroy me." (And that wouldn't help her.) "No, it wouldn't, that's why I've decided it's best for me to leave home no matter what happens and I'll expect the worse."

Eight weeks later the boy's *ability* to leave is recorded:

"I'm muddled up today for a different reason, I'm happy and I'm scared, but mostly happy. I told my mother that I'm moving out of the house next month, as soon as school is over and I have me the job we talked about. I'm going to live at the place and this gives me a good excuse to move. The job's a good one, and I wish to hell school was out today so I could start, but I guess I can stand another month of mother." (How did she react to your telling her this?) "Oh, I forgot to tell you—she just collapsed and now she thinks she's sick but I can't help her."

## The Adolescent's Need of Parents

Authoritative agencies frequently change the environment of the adolescent without his consent. However, total change can never be brought about by this alone, as some authoritative figures might believe. The importance of independence to the adolescent makes him need to be a participant in the change and to have an active part in originating any new environment for himself. Sometimes the individual will make favorable adaptations to a change that is made for him, but only after it becomes familiar and he can be helped by a meaningful relationship to see that it has something constructive to offer him. The chances for success in placement, however, are enhanced when the teen-ager makes his own decision and demonstrates his own ability to move prior to his actual placement.

For the most part adolescents are better off living with their own parents until such time as they can have some usual reason for leaving, such as taking a job or going away to school. Considerable guilt can be felt if less usual reasons precipitate the move. This guilt is not always apparent at the time and can be delayed, even until adulthood, unless it is thoroughly resolved in treatment. Their feelings of being "in the way" or "always causing trouble" can make them assume the responsibility for leaving home, though the real reason may be unrelated and may not rest with the adolescent himself. While on the face of things adolescents seem not to be able to accept imperfections in their own parents and home situations, they actually possess an unusual degree of tolerance when it comes down to the question of leaving the "undesirable situation" or the "bad parent." They tend to have less acceptance of themselves than they do of others and it is here that so much help is needed. Some of the most effective casework is done with the teen-ager who chooses to stay in his own home, though the circumstances may seem undesirable and unalterable. Some adolescents have a capacity to use essentially destructive situations in a way that is constructive for them. As one boy told his worker:

"I know that I live in a god-awful home but every day it teaches me more how not to be, while you help me know how I want to be, so I guess I'll turn out pretty good after all."

## Which Type of Foster Care is Best

It is difficult to make any general statement about which adolescents can go to boarding homes and which ones should be placed in institutions. The decision is dependent on the nature of the child and the kind of problem he presents as well as on the quality and availability of services, in any



given community. The adolescent himself will generally be able to tell his worker which seems best for him, if he has been allowed to participate fully in his preparation for placement. This process necessarily precedes any final decisions. He will need to learn about the various possibilities, sometimes visit them and then evaluate them with his worker. It is an unfortunate community situation that makes it necessary for a teen-ager to *have* to go to one service or the other. Certainly no adolescent must be institutionalized unless society wants to be protected from him or he needs protection from society. Some of those who are physically ill, mentally ill, mentally subnormal or seriously delinquent can come in the "must" list.

When the adolescent leaves home he gives up what means "family" to him. If it is felt that a continuance of family experience is needed, then the boarding home is the nearest substitute, though it is not usual that this takes on the connotation of "substitute family" to this age group. It is a different experience from home, with different people who take on different meaning than do his own family. It seems erroneous to think of any institutional group as being a "substitute family." When the adolescent is placed in an institution, he knows, and it should be understood by all concerned, that he will be having an experience that is different from any family. Social workers have tended to want to justify all placements by making them seem as much like home and family as possible. The "unlike" nature of the placement may be the very essential needed in the treatment. Adolescents, especially, need to learn out of difference. They tend to identify with someone not like themselves and to want new kinds of experience. This "differentia" is the medium in which they grow and learn and it is fortunate that social service has it to offer to those who need it.

### Adolescents—A Challenge to the Caseworker

One of the reasons that casework has had such a high degree of success with adolescents is the fact that it offers them a different kind of experience than they have ever known. In spite of this recognized success, a sizable number of social workers acknowledge that they do not wish to work with adolescents though they recognize the increasing need for their services to this particular age group. A cursory inquiry about the reasons for such unwillingness usually evokes such answers as: "They scare me!" "I don't understand them" or "They are nature's phenomenon and only time can help them outgrow their problems." It is true that they can be frightening but they need not be, as they can be understood.

Their natural development can be a source of concern for them, but the larger share of their problems is socially determined and the social worker can help with these.

The bases for the fear of working with members of this particular age group, ranging from thirteen to twenty-one years, can be many. Some of these stem from the worker's continued feelings about his own adolescent experience. This can become reactivated as he relates to another having similar experience. This countertransference can be especially anxiety-provoking if the worker's own problems have been disguised rather than resolved.

Adolescents strive to personalize any relationships that have meaning for them, and in so doing they can probe deeply into the sensitive areas of some lives when they ask such personal questions as:

"Are you married?" "If not, why not?" "Why are so many social workers unmarried?" or "How much money do you earn?"

Just being "grand and professional" is not an acceptable immunity for avoiding an answer to such questions from the teen-ager who may need to know these things about his worker to decide whether or not he wants to move into closer relationship with him. He may be needing to test out the extent of the mature life of someone who has already survived adolescence, as proof against his possible doubts that it can be outlived, thus being helped to build ego strength.

The strong intensity of the relationship which most adolescents establish with the adult person who they think likes and understands them can be frightening when it is realized the amount of responsibility that goes with accepting this. The obviously erotic nature of the attachments teen-agers build can cause a feeling of uneasiness in a caseworker, who finds himself the object of lover-like relationship. Unless this uneasiness is recognized and handled, it can affect the ability of the worker to help the teen-ager feel comfortable enough in the casework experience to build the kind of ego-strength that allows him to move forward to other relationships. The younger adolescent may express his affectional ties by such demonstrative behavior as kissing, putting his arm around the worker or the giving of personal gifts such as photographs of himself. The older ones tend to repress their erotic feelings, and channel a part of them into discussion which is often so exceedingly frank that it is threatening to adult "niceness." To be helpful the worker needs to understand himself in relation to the individual, to prevent unnecessary rebuff of this erotic aggression.

More general success in working with adolescent problems seems to be attained when the gender of the worker and client are the same. With this combina-

tion any relationship must be recognized as being a homosexual one that can be normal for the younger teen-ager and necessary for the older ones who have not yet solved their ambivalent relationships of the oedipal period. The general social disapproval of any recognized expression of homosexuality at any period of development can affect the worker's security in consciously building such a relationship unless he has himself accepted his own constitutional bisexuality. If the worker shows uneasiness because of the nature of this relationship, this can carry over to the adolescent, making him uncomfortable and possibly panicky should he develop a conscious recognition of his involvement. Homosexuality is a component in every adolescent case. It is doubtful that caseworkers are equipped to treat homosexuality when that is the basic problem unless they qualify as psychotherapists.

Adolescents are capable of hating as strongly as they can love and they need to be granted the same right to do this in the treatment experience. The intensity, the unpredictability, and the unusual ways of expressing hostility, can be a threat to the worker. The adult does not expect all relationships to be positive, but he learns pretty well when to expect negative expression and to prepare for this. From the adolescent, such expression is ever uncertain and the worker may find himself totally unprepared for the outbursts of repulsion. These violent manifestations are not always explainable. They can cause the worker to be caught in the same distrust for this impulsive behavior that the adolescent has himself and which is a source of concern for him. When this occurs, the help given is minimized for it is lacking in the kind of personal support that is so much

needed, a relationship and environment that are constant, permissive, and accepting.

Certain physical factors about adolescents can frighten those who work with them. Their manner of dress is often boldly unconventional and is usually affected to announce to the world that the wearer is physically mature and sexually ripe. The conscious casualness with which the costumes are worn tells something of the teen-ager's refusal to be hurried or be molded into the conventional patterns of adulthood. Examples are the present-day blue jeans that fit skin tight and hang at a precarious point, below the usual belt line, leaving one to speculate on how they stay up; the shirt sleeves rolled high on the arm to expose the bicep muscles; the tight sweaters that accentuate the newly developed breasts. These are their exhibits of maturity with which they attract each other and at the same time manage to shock adult propriety. More justifiably frightening are the tatoos, the duck-back haircuts and the zoot suits, or their equivalents, that earmark an identity with particular groups that are at early odds with society.

If the caseworker is concerned with some of these factors in adolescence he may understand that own parents, boarding parents and institutional staffs might well be even more concerned because they have not had special training and experience for understanding human behavior. Any anxiety they may feel about the adolescent will necessarily affect his acceptance and treatment in his living situation. The caseworker has the responsibility for seeing that parents and substitute parents are given some opportunity for help with their feelings for and understanding of the adolescent as well as help in understanding themselves in relation to him.

## CASEWORK IMPLICATIONS OF A FOSTER MOTHERS' CLUB\*

**Margaret Harnett**

Caseworker

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*Other League member agencies have had foster mothers' clubs, or less formal groups. This interesting account should stimulate some comments and questions. CHILD WELFARE would welcome a symposium.*

THIS profound-sounding title rather frightened me at first. I had already committed myself to telling about the Foster Mothers' Club of the Children's Service Bureau but I had been spurred into it by the enthusiasm of the foster mothers themselves. I have

\* Presented at Southern Regional Conference of the Child Welfare League of America, Shreveport, La., March, 1950.

become identified with them as a staff representative, also as a group member, and with my usual pattern of considering this club their own project, I asked whether they thought there was yet enough to say about us. They started shooting ideas at me from all sides. They were literally thrilled that here was an opportunity to spread the word, to tell others about



an organization that has meant so much to them. Their enthusiasm rolled up and up into excited dreams of possibly planting seeds for the formation of other Foster Mothers' Clubs, and on up into the clouds they went with visions of a National Affiliation of Foster Mothers' Clubs of America, with national by-laws, emblem and eventually a pin. On the wave of this enthusiasm, I felt myself sailing forth as their representative, carrying their messages to the world. They not only provided the material but also the stimulus that put me here today.

Then I realized that what the foster mothers would expect and what others would expect was slightly different. Instead of being on the inside looking out, I must stand on the outside looking in. I think that is the way things have developed all along. Things have taken a natural course without any conscious planning and I have looked at them afterward, thinking, "Well, now isn't that interesting?"

### The Club is Founded

The actual founding of the Foster Mothers' Club was not planned. It had been a tradition for the Board members of our agency to give a party annually honoring the foster mothers for their service to the agency. At these parties some of the foster mothers suggested it would be nice to have a club. Everyone thought that would be very nice and that was the end of it until the next year. For three years everyone thought it would be very, very nice, but nothing was done about it. Staff shortages had in previous years made it impossible for a staff member to give any time to it and the foster mothers alone could not get started. Last May, following the annual foster mothers' party, I was assigned not really to organize a Foster Mothers' Club but to provide the way if one was really desired.

The first meeting was rather a disappointment. Of the twenty-odd foster mothers who thought it would be so very nice, only three arrived. I wondered whether we should go any further but these three peppy, lively foster mothers had such strong convictions that a Foster Mothers' Club would have so much real value that they carried me along. After all we had enough members present for officers. The one who had the most program ideas became Program Chairman; the one who could type became Secretary and the one left over became President. Then they moved, seconded and unanimously carried all sorts of plans for the future of the Foster Mothers' Club. It has really been the enthusiastic leadership of these three, the Executive Committee, that has given the group birth and life.

Now, in standing on the outside looking in, I have tried to analyze the group. It is certainly a democratic group. It is wholly and truly their club. The staff representative has at no time assumed a directing or dominating role. In honest scrutiny of my activity, I am sure I have served them only upon their request. Two of their educational programs did come out of suggestions they welcomed but all their other programs they planned on their own, even one I had some qualms about. I did help them with an article they sent to the newspaper, but only after a frantic telephone call from the Executive Committee asking if I could please join them after they were already gathered. They also requested my help in the wording of the purposes and by-laws, but the ideas were theirs, not mine. I have felt all along that I was contributing my share as a member of the group, not an outsider, and have followed group wishes and interests rather than superimposing my own. Not until their yearbook was completed did I find they had dubbed me "staff adviser" but I learned later they had a difficult time thinking up a title for me, so I do not feel this term carries any implication of domination. They wanted to include my name. I just wasn't a foster mother, so they had to label me something.

### The Composition of the Club

There are variances in this group. There are variances in economic, social and educational backgrounds as you will find in any group of agency foster mothers. The variances however are not too great for unity and common interest. The variances are not so extreme that they cannot appreciate one another's experience. For example, our foster mother, Mrs. Smith, is a very simple, loving woman with less than a grade school education. One day she was telling about the loss of two children she had had for two and one half years. She described how it hurt but also told of her happiness for the children and their own mother who "now had each other as mother and children ought." Tears came to the eyes of our foster mother, Mrs. Jones. She had never yet experienced this area of foster-motherhood. Mrs. Jones is a sophisticated college graduate, but she sat wholly absorbed in what Mrs. Smith was saying. I am sure she had no room for thought about Mrs. Smith's simplicity or her grammatical errors. Each group member, regardless of her economic, social or educational background, contributes as much or as little as she is able; and out of the pooling of experience, each takes something away which gives her new insight and understanding.

*(Continued on page 13)*

## EDITORIAL COMMENTS

### Child Welfare Responsibilities in the National Emergency

WITH all of us in the children's field there has been a reluctant and growing consciousness of the necessity to consider the impact of the national emergency on child welfare services. A recent meeting under the auspices of the National Social Welfare Assembly, which brought together national agency representatives to consider their responsibilities in the present emergency, has reinforced in our minds the need to think in practical terms of child welfare in the war situation. The following observations are taken in part from a CWL report submitted to the Assembly.

The experience of the League in World War II brought to light forcibly areas of need which were outstandingly war-created. Consideration of war emergency organization can profitably review mistakes made and successes, in projecting for the future.

One of the outstanding problems created as a result of the growth and movement of war industries was the utter inadequacy of day care facilities. In 1943 the League found that there had not been in any degree sufficient clarification and co-ordination of local planning by over-all groups, with the consequence that few, if any, communities had developed a balanced program for children of working mothers. A recent study by the League's day care consultant indicates a present serious shortage of day care centers, with fewer in operation than during World War II, when there were not enough.

Another major problem was the urgent need for additional facilities for foster care of children, both in family homes and in institutions. The scarcity of foster homes was acute. Popular campaigns for foster homes usually were not planned with awareness of the traditional inadequacies of board rates paid to foster mothers, a factor which put child-placing agencies under a serious handicap and in competition with war-industry remuneration. Institutional programs for children increased during the war period, and in some places institutional programs were inaugurated to meet requests from agencies requiring foster care of children. During World War II the League found that many communities had no agencies prepared to undertake protective services for children. We found that neglect of children was on the increase, together with exploitation as represented by unparalleled violation of child labor laws.

The need for foster home recruitment has continued, even under a semipeacetime economy. Several cities are experimenting with foster family day care, a program which did not meet with full success during World War II, to the end that some foster care needs can be met on a daytime basis. Present programs for foster care of children cannot meet growing demands without additional staff and funds.

Any consideration of a war services program for 1951 should view as first priority the inevitable expansion of day care facilities, and the need for over-all consultation, training, and co-ordination

with other community programs. There is lack of trained personnel experienced in day care programs, and also lag in public understanding of what constitutes a good day care program. Thus, in addition to consultation to communities and agencies there is the need for training programs as well as educational services.

Projected war emergency programs for foster care of children who could not be cared for in their own homes should consider the need for increased technical advice to agencies and communities undertaking increased burdens of foster care, training programs for newly recruited staffs, and recruitment of foster homes on a national and local level.

Mass evacuation programs such as those experienced in England imply broad national planning, inasmuch as an ordered movement of persons would be required. Throughout the 2,000 child-caring agencies and institutions in the country there is staff experienced in temporary care of children under emergent conditions, which would inevitably be drafted to give leadership. Assistance in developing training programs for such staffs as would be recruited, and consultation with citizens' groups laying out comprehensive programs for child care services of this nature, would require a marked increase in the League's national staff.

On the national level we would favor a broader emergency service organization than USO was or Associated Services now is, embracing those other organizations which have as their responsibility provision of voluntary services to the general population. We have question as to the creation of an organization which not only plans and operates its services, but also is responsible for raising its own funds. We believe that there should be a marked distinction, as in a local community program, between the operation group providing services, the planning group, and that group responsible for fund-raising.

The League, in reporting to the Assembly, emphasized what may already be obvious, that the regular peacetime needs of communities in the child welfare field are enhanced, rather than lessened, in a period of international crisis, such as we now have. We would hope that as we consider increased Chest appropriations to meet the needs of the armed forces and their families under present conditions, we will keep in mind continuing needs and what will, in most cases, be the increased needs in the so-called peacetime child welfare agencies.

Serious issues are involved, which must be brought forcibly to the attention of those concerned for child welfare in a national emergency. How can the community maintain adequate support of basic child care services, in the face of increased demands by programs such as those geared to preserve the welfare and morale of the armed forces? How can voluntary agencies, governmental, and military, achieve a true working and financial partnership which will insure adequate services for children? Experience in World War II clearly showed that entire populations become a part of combat areas. Support of basic community services, public and private, must be expanded with the inevitable increase in their responsibilities. We must take immediate steps to insure that children's services are not sacrificed to war needs.

SPENCER H. CROOKES

# THE BOARD MEMBER

## *The Place of the Board*

### IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF A PUBLIC AGENCY\*

Mary Potts

Supervisor Child Welfare Division  
Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

*This paper holds that the Board plays a determining role in any agency, public or private, through its responsibility for the selection of a qualified executive, its responsibility for policy making, support in financing the agency adequately, and through its role in public relations.*

THE functions of the agency determine in a measure the manner in which the Board is appointed and the responsibilities delegated to it. The Department of Public Welfare in North Carolina has developed on the basis of statutory provisions for social services to families and individuals and broad responsibilities for developing social action within the community. It is noteworthy that in spite of the millions of dollars of assistance administered directly to families in need, three out of every four persons seeking social services from North Carolina county departments of public welfare request nonfinancial services only.

Public Welfare in North Carolina is state supervised and county administered. Each county has a Board of Public Welfare composed of three members, one appointed by the State Board of Public Welfare, one named by the county commissioners, and the third chosen by agreement between the first two members. Board members serve three-year staggered terms, and may be reappointed for one term only.

By statute, the County Welfare Board has authority to appoint the Superintendent of Public Welfare, to review and approve the agency budget, to review and approve all payments to Old Age Assistance and Aid to Dependent Children recipients, and to sign checks for such assistance. All other functions of the Board are advisory. The Board looks to its executive secretary, the Superintendent of Public Welfare, for the professional administration of the programs.

For purposes of effective administration, the Department I represent has seven divisions, each with its designated functions. These divisions are: The Applications Division, Public Assistance and Family Casework Division, Child Welfare Division, Social Work Division of Domestic and Juvenile Court, Medical and Institutional Division, Records Division, and the Finance Division. It has often been said that public agencies are particularly vulnerable to political pressures. The Child Welfare Division of

this agency has never yet been subjected to the least political pressure; it has enjoyed complete freedom to make professional decisions, within agency policy, and follow through without fear that the decision will be reversed by political interference or by interference of the agency Board. This same statement could be made in our agency by the supervisor of the Division of Public Assistance and Family Casework, who is responsible for an operation over which the Board has legal authority to approve or withhold funds in individual cases. For a number of years I have noticed that the agencies which complain most about political interference and interference of Boards are by and large the agencies which have the weakest administrators and the weakest Boards. If this observation is correct, and if it is also correct that in most agencies the staff is selected by the executive, and the executive is selected by the Board, then it becomes clear that the answer to effective administration rests with the selection and the function of the Board.

In every community there are men and women of statesmanship interested not only in the well-being of their fellow men, but with the foresight to plan today for the well-being of the community tomorrow. These persons have the emotional and social maturity to make good Board members. They are not interested in personal glory, or in remuneration; they are not interested in the power which such a position may give them. They are interested in the well-being of the community. Such people should be sought out and made known to appointing authorities long before the time arrives to appoint a new Board member. Appointing authorities usually welcome suggestions for new Board members from the agency executive or from active Board members who have proved themselves on the job.

### The Board is Kept Related to Service

If a social agency Board is to perform its legal function without interfering with administration, it must

\* Presented at League's Southern Regional Conference, Shreveport, La., March, 1950.



have confidence in the administrator. If the Board is to perform its counseling services to the executive and to the community, it must be kept informed. We have found our Board to be interested in basic facts about the community, in trends, and in agency problems and accomplishments. This information helps the Board to create mental images which can be passed on to others, and which can be used as a basis for determining policy and evaluating agency program. We are exceedingly fortunate in the make-up of our Board. The Chairman is personnel director of a packing company, a member of the Oral Examining Board of the State Merit System, a member of the Board of the Family and Children's Service (which is a Community Chest agency), and a prominent leader in numerous community activities for social welfare. He is the County Commissioners' appointee. The State Board's appointee is a prominent minister who is conducting a highly successful church program embracing a wide scope of activities for the entire family. He is also prominently known in the field of industrial-labor-relations counseling. The third member of the Board is a grammar school principal who has been known for years to have an active and progressive interest in children. She has served in numerous community positions of prominence. Although our Board consistently has demonstrated a constructive interest in community affairs, it is still no easy task to keep this Board informed, stimulated and active. Good Boards don't "just happen." Each new Board member is presented with a copy of the statutes pertaining to the job, copies of *A Handbook for County Welfare Board Members* and *Public Welfare in North Carolina*, prepared by the State Agency, and a membership in the American Public Welfare Association. Board members regularly receive copies of the *North Carolina Public Welfare News*, *North Carolina Public Welfare Statistics*, and a variety of other publications released on special occasions by the State Agency. Although these materials consistently are made available to new Board members, our experience would indicate that it is too much to hope for them to read the material, digest it carefully and come up with "all the answers."

Every opportunity is taken to discuss accomplishments as well as knotty problems and their implications on social work practice. This is the executive's job. Prior to each monthly meeting the Board is supplied with minutes of the last meeting and with an Activities Report which traces accomplishments of the Department during the past month. Board members frequently call on the executive for elaboration of special items of interest. From time to time special reports regarding a single agency function are discussed in detail prior to public release. Board par-

ticipation in preparing such material is helpful. It helps both Board and executive to see eye to eye; it keeps the report readable to "the man on the street." During the past year the agency issued such special publications as:

1. A Manual for Foster Home Parents
2. Issuance of Work Certificates for Minors as a function of the County Department of Public Welfare
3. Report of the Social Work Unit of Domestic and Juvenile Court
4. Foster Home Placement of Children as a function of the Department of Public Welfare
5. Parole Supervision as a function of the Department of Public Welfare
6. An evaluation of General Assistance as a function of the Department of Public Welfare.

The Board, likewise, gave invaluable assistance to the Executive in prepublication evaluation of a thumbnail annual statement. All of these publications were used by the Board not only to inform themselves, but also as media for public relations. During the past year the County Welfare Board has also given invaluable assistance in planning Child Welfare policy in respect to:

1. The use of attorneys in the adoption process
2. The development of foster homes for detention care of delinquent children
3. Special educational needs of children coming to the attention of the Department of Public Welfare
4. Special medical needs of children under the care of the Department of Public Welfare
5. The feasibility of establishing a specialized domestic counseling service within the Department of Public Welfare
6. Group counseling as a function of the Department of Public Welfare
7. Homemaker service as a function of the Department of Public Welfare.

### Effective Social Action

Through the practice of acting as a "sounding board" and as a counseling group the Welfare Board receives firsthand knowledge of what the agency is trying to do, the problems it is faced with in trying to do it, and the degree of success and failure in reaching objectives. Consequently the Board is in a good position to "sell the community." This "selling" job by the Board is done when and where it is most strategic. Board members are in constant touch with individuals in a position to help the agency accomplish its ends. Much of the social action stimulated by the Welfare Board takes place in other agencies. For example, the stand taken by the Welfare Board two years ago in favor of expansion of vocational education opportunities materialized this past year in the establishment of a Negro junior college, and in the expansion of vocational opportunities in other schools. The stand taken by the Welfare Board in

respect to the need for expanded recreational opportunities, undoubtedly had an effect on the passage of a bond issue for this purpose. We expect that the individual and group action of the Board in respect to federal legislation will help to put across progressive legislation for the benefit of children and others. The Welfare Board last year was directly responsible for the formation of a boys' choir which contributed materially to the reduction of juvenile delinquency in the neighborhood where it was established. Day-by-day association with members of the Board of County Commissioners, members of the State Legislature, as well as Congressional representatives, "eases the pain" of budget sessions. It is pretty well known in advance, and pretty well agreed in advance of budget hearings what the Department needs and what progress can be undertaken within the next year.

The Welfare Board, the Executive and his staff, join together in measuring the job, and measuring up to the job. Each of the partners has learned to distinguish one another's respective functions and to respect them. We are meeting reasonably well the demands of the job today, but we are not satisfied with that. We are planning today to meet more adequately the demands tomorrow. We are planning with other public and private agencies in the community to make a stronger community team for social action. Yes, we use our Board and our Board also uses us. The result—a vital organization designed to improve family and community living.

### New League Members

Division of Child Welfare  
Department of Economic Security  
Frankfort, Kentucky  
Miss Marjorie M. Wilson, Director

The Day Nursery Association of Cleveland  
2050 East 96th Street  
Cleveland, Ohio  
Miss Eleanor Hosley, Executive Secretary

### CONFERENCES

The Eastern Regional Conference is scheduled for February 8, 9, 10, 1951, in Baltimore, Maryland. Mr. Clark L. Mock, Executive Secretary, Family and Children's Society of Baltimore, is chairman.

The Southern Regional Conference is planned for February 15, 16, 17, 1951, in Biloxi, Mississippi. Miss Sara L. Ricks, Director, Division of Child Welfare, Mississippi State Department of Public Welfare, is chairman.

The New England Regional Conference will be held May 28 and 29, 1951, in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Mr. Robert M. Mulford, General

Director, Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Boston, is chairman.

The Midwest Regional Conference will be held June 21, 22, 23, 1951, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Mr. Fred DelliQuadri, Director, Division of Child Welfare and Youth Service, Wisconsin State Department of Public Welfare, is chairman.

It is hoped to develop three additional conferences, one in the southwest region, and two in the Pacific region.

The National Conference of Social Work will be held May 13-18, 1951, in Atlantic City. The League's Program Chairman is Miss Janice Bowen, Executive Director, Child and Family Service, Portland, Maine. The Co-chairman is Miss Marie C. Smith, Director, Child Welfare Division, Colorado State Department of Public Welfare at Denver.

### CASEWORK IMPLICATIONS OF A FOSTER MOTHERS' CLUB

(Continued from page 9)

The group varies also as to experience with the agency. Some members have been with us a long time and some are new. Rather than hampering unity this seems to give it strength. The older members welcome warmly each new member who quickly feels a part of something that is not so new as it seemed.

The real strength of the group is its common interest. It is a special interest group absorbed in being good foster parents to children with many needs and problems. There is a community of feeling in which no sides are taken. All are searching for the best ways of handling things. They are individuals who are not alone with their problems. There is a bond of sympathy, unity and harmony as together they try to help one another.

It has some elements of an occupational group. We do in some ways consider foster parents as an extension of agency staff and as such this group can be considered an occupational one. It is a voluntary one in that all agency foster mothers need not, in fact do not, belong. It has potentiality as a social action group, in fact has already expressed itself in community social problems. It is a *purposeful group* with definite group goals. I quote from the yearbook of the Foster Mothers' Club of the Children's Service Bureau:

The purpose of the club shall be:

1. To share each other's problems.
2. To provide opportunity for hearing noted speakers.
3. To improve our abilities as foster parents.
4. To interpret our work to the community and to interest other prospective parents.

Having analyzed this group, let us examine it in relation to some of the anxieties I believe most caseworkers have about groups in general and foster mother groups in particular. I think caseworkers tend to shy away from the use of groups perhaps because we do not understand the group process sufficiently. We fear that hostilities and aggressions

will come out that will be unhandleable. Thus far this has not happened and I have tried to figure out why.

For one thing, in a voluntary group there seems to be a process of natural selection operating. In the agency we do have three pretty hostile, negative foster mothers. I tremble to think about how they might behave or what they might do to a foster mothers' club, but they have never attended a meeting. They have instead, with all their hostility, vehemently expressed to their caseworkers their complete disapproval of a foster mothers' club and have said definitely that they do not want to join. The very characteristic that would make us fear them seems to automatically eliminate them.

For those whose hostilities and aggressions are not strong enough to keep them away, there appears to be a group censorship which serves as a control. Any individual who is voluntarily a member of a group does have regard for the approval of the group. There is a group pressure in the esteem of the group, a collective pressure that restrains display of hostility and aggression. This group censorship operates on a visitor as well as on a group member. I mentioned before that this group has planned its own programs even when the staff representative had some qualms about it.

One day I found they had invited as the guest speaker a Juvenile Court Officer whom I knew was particularly hostile to the agency. I will grant you I did have many fears, that now hostilities and aggressions would come out that would be difficult to handle. However, the officer humbly opened his talk with a statement that he felt highly honored to be invited to talk with a group which had the services of so many trained social workers, as he himself was untrained. He then told of many interesting court problems and never once intimated that he and our agency often disagreed.

I feel quite certain the group censorship operated in this situation and, if it did, I am confident you can count on it.

One fear that might concern some is that a foster mothers' club could become a social or even a gossip group. This has not been our experience. I believe that if the special interest characteristic of the group is fed, this could not occur. One of the reasons a non-joining foster mother gave for her disapproval of the club was that it would develop into a pressure group against the agency, but this must have been an expression of her own hostility because the opposite has happened. The group has become strongly identified with the agency and its needs.

### Staff Representation

Although I think a foster mothers' club should be a democratic group and belong to them, I think it is important to have a staff representative. I also believe that the staff representative should have an understanding of the individual foster mother and have up-to-date knowledge of what is going on between each individual foster mother and the agency. Things have come up occasionally that might have been difficult to explain satisfactorily if the staff representative had been unaware of the situation or unacquainted with the individuals involved. For example:

Two foster mothers were awaiting a child and one was placed. It was important for the staff representative to be able to explain, on the spot, how and why the choice had been made.

I foresee another situation wherein the group has practically accepted a prospective foster home applicant. It will be important to keep abreast of this particular foster home study. We can hope the group is right in thinking she will make a wonderful foster mother, but if our homefinder discovers she would not, we would have to be able to face the group with some pretty good interpretation. The group tends to keep us on our toes, tends to sharpen our diagnostic thinking and our ability to explain ourselves in acceptable terms. Our agency is a small one and the staff representatives know practically every foster mother anyway out of five years with the agency, so this has presented no problem to us. However, we can see the possibility of problems arising out of lack of understanding of the individual or lack of knowledge of what is going on between them and the agency.

### How the Group Operates

Let us look at the use of the group in the education and treatment process. Purpose No. 1 in the By-Laws of the Foster Mothers' Club of the Children's Service Bureau is "To share each other's problems." By sharing each other's problems the foster mothers have found a kind of group security. They are not alone. They find other foster mothers have troubles too. They have a bond of sympathy and gain a strength out of unity, a feeling of the group being behind them and cheering them on. They also help each other grow in understanding. The experiences of one foster mother helps another.

One particular foster mother has rather colorfully related her adoption efforts prior to coming into the agency, rather tragic experiences that left her firmly convinced she would take no other child into her home except through an agency.

Another foster mother recently referred an adoption situation to us:

We think she might well have made the adoption placement herself, on the side, if she had not learned from a member of her own group how complicated such a placement can get.

Hearing actual experience filled with firsthand emotional expression certainly made a deeper impression on her than anything general or theoretical that could ever have been said to her.

There is also something about expression in general in a group that relieves the burdensome feeling of personal responsibility. It leaves people freer to express themselves and freer to accept criticism. There isn't the need to be defensive and thus block on learning or acceptance. There is less emotional interference to insight if there is this diffusion, if people can say, "This is not being said just to me, but to all of us." We saw this operate particularly when our director was asked to be the guest speaker.

Two well-meaning foster mothers had sent adoptive applicants to us for particular children, causing some embarrassment to the agency. This seems to be a pretty general error arising out of lack of understanding; and presenting the best way to refer applicants with the reasons why, in general terms, to the group, gave them all a better understanding without anyone feeling personally criticized.

Other general problems were presented and after the meeting one foster mother, whom the director has



been carrying for over a year, said: "I felt so much better after your talk." The director had said nothing she had not said many times in direct contact with this foster mother but she was relieved to hear it all restated in completely general terms to the group.

Individual anxieties are relieved. New foster mothers get to know and understand the agency quicker through the Foster Mothers' Club. We sometimes forget how much anxiety the best of new foster mothers have about what is expected of them by the agency. One foster mother told me she was so scared. She said:

"I wanted to do it so badly—my own wants were hurting me. I wondered what I was supposed to do and how strict was the agency? It was such a comfort to meet the other foster mothers."

They all get strength, comfort and growth out of the group. They develop affectionate mutual friendships. They are gathered together with a love for a particular set of social values, that of being good foster parents. They have a group loyalty and a group morale and out of this shared feeling they gain individual strength. Out of their co-operative endeavor, out of this feeling of belonging, they get a greater sense of personal security.

### The Significance to the Agency and to Members

This group loyalty—this belonging—this feeling of "we-ness" carries over to the agency. Through the group, they have a much closer identification with the agency. Through general discussion, they get a better understanding of the policies and needs of the agency. Basic knowledge and ideals take on more meaning in group discussion. This loyalty and identification is not just something we think we observe in this group. They have already demonstrated it.

Following a recent exposé of black market adoptions in Miami, some of the newspaper articles criticized the "red tape" of social agencies. The foster mothers became infuriated at this and wrote an article in defense of the agency methods. A very good article it was too.

Another demonstration of loyalty and identification is the way in which they unanimously volunteered to work on the Community Chest campaign. They are also conscious of the need for foster homes and invite guests to their club whom they think might make good prospective foster mothers. As they express it, "If they get to know us first, they won't be so hesitant about applying."

Because of their group activities the foster mothers have had an opportunity to meet all the staff members and many of the Board members too. This has increased the feeling of unity of "all working together" for the service of the agency.

Another important thing the foster mothers have acquired in their club is status. There is a strengthening expansion of the ego in being a member of a group you consider very worth while. They hold their heads high as members of a group so committed to the philosophy of learning by experience. They can't then afford to be rigid. They take pride in membership in a group so committed as a part of the agency. They can't then pull against it. It is delightful to see how this has operated with one particular foster mother

who had continually been evaluated as a person who would not work with the agency. As a prominent member of the Foster Mothers' Club she has become so identified she would do anything requested of her that was within her physical endurance. Another thing they do is brag about their foster children the way any group of women brag about own children. It would be hard for any of them to face the group having let a child down whom they had been bragging about.

They have also achieved a social status in the community. For years social workers have tried to glamorize the foster mother, to present her to the community as not just a boardinghouse operator. Our Foster Mothers' Club has found its way to the society page quite a few times.

The Foster Mothers' Club also serves as a channel of interpreting the work of the agency to the community, by word of mouth, every time they break into print, and their next meeting will include a fifteen-minute radio broadcast about their work.

### Community Activities of Club Members

Through their group relationship the foster mothers have been inspired toward more participation in community efforts and other group activities tying in various groups. I have already mentioned their participation in the Community Chest campaign. They became acquainted with the Mental Health Society through one of their programs involving a moving picture. They interested their various P.T.A. groups in requesting this same program. The Scouts gained two new troop leaders out of the relationships in the Foster Mothers' Club and two Girl Scout troops became acquainted with the Children's Service Bureau by making the yearbooks and also hats and favors for a Valentine party of the Foster Mothers' Club. They also tied in the staff representative as a member of a Scout troop advisory committee. You see, it works both ways. They plan to invite the foster mothers of the District Welfare Board to their next educational program and they hope eventually to sponsor some educational programs, inviting the vast group of licensed nonagency foster mothers. They see themselves as leaders in a big program for more and better foster parents. They feel a serious responsibility to the child, to the agency and to the community.

This feeling of unity—this "we-ness"—has its influence on the feelings of the foster children too. Some of the meetings have been group parties where foster children, own children, and Board members' children, too, have all had a grand time together. The nose count at the Valentine party was thirty-eight children and twenty-five adults. I think this intermingling relieves some of the discomforts of being a foster child. The children are proud of their foster mothers' activities. One little girl proudly pointed out which cookies she and her foster mother had baked for the party. The children feel closer to their caseworkers, too, seeing them in group enjoyment.

The Foster Mothers' Club is also a help to the caseworker in diagnosis. In the group, when the attention is not focused on the individual, things come out that give one a better understanding of the individual. By

observing a person in action in a group you get a clearer impression of the kind of person she is. You have not only your own observation but the attitude of other members toward her. This was particularly true in relation to one foster mother whom we were continuing to evaluate as an adoptive applicant. I am sure we have greater confidence in our diagnosis because of observing her in action in the group.

The Foster Mothers' Club of the Children's Service Bureau is not yet quite one year old so we can't claim anything for it, but we wonder if it didn't have some-

thing to do with the amazingly low rate of last year's replacements. Out of 51 children placed during the year, only three placements broke down and none of these were older or difficult children. They were infants; they broke fast; the difficulty was with the foster homes. None of the foster mothers were members of the club.

In the Foster Mothers' Club, I believe that case-work and group work have merged in providing mutual benefits for the child, the foster mother, the agency, and the community.

## INTERPRETING GOOD ADOPTION PRACTICE

**Bernice F. Seltz**

Secretary, Family-Child Welfare Division  
The Council of Social Agencies  
Cincinnati, Ohio

*Word has reached us from several communities that accelerated programs of interpretation have resulted in increased numbers of applications for agency adoption placements. This is one community's experience through the use of "trial balloons."*

I WONDER why the number of illegal placements was so high in 1947. . . . I gave away two of those infants myself. That was before we had an Adoptions Committee."

Said a prominent physician.

"To think that I urged my own children to get a baby through the gray market only four years ago. I'm glad they weren't successful. That was before the Adoptions Committee enlightened me on the facts of life of adoptions."

Said a well-known board member of a maternity home. Perhaps these remarks sound trite, or perhaps they remind you of the ads for Hadacol, Konjola and the rest of the patent medicines. The fact remains that both statements were made publicly in Cincinnati within the past two months by members of the Adoptions Committee of the Council of Social Agencies.

Many communities have adoptions committees composed of members from various professional groups who from time to time are confronted with problems relating to adoption. Hamilton County's committee is typical. Members represent the fields of law, medicine, nursing, religion, hospital management and social work. The group was established in June 1948, at the request of the professional workers in the children's field, comprising the Child Welfare Problems Committee of the Council of Social Agencies, following preliminary self-study of their work by the adoption agency executives. Impetus was given to the concept of a citizens committee because of a similar successful committee operated by the local Jewish Family Service Bureau.

An increase in placements by social agencies and a decline in placements by private citizens has been concurrent with the operation of the Adoption Committee. The Committee's objective has been to reach specific groups of people with its factual and interpretive material, rather than to disseminate information to the general public through newspapers and other mass media. The specific interpretive projects used show a variety of approaches. Because of their

experimental nature they seem much like "trial balloons."

At the outset, a very careful analysis of the annual figures of adoptions and the source of the original placement was prepared, in statistical, and later in chart, form. The total number of adoptions, the number of original placements made by adoption agencies, the number of original placements made by private citizens, and the number of children adopted by step-parents and other relatives, was compiled for the years 1946 and 1947, and has been prepared annually since June 1948. This material served as a starting point for Committee discussion, and was distributed to key community people. It was felt to be so valuable that adoption agencies developed a supplementary report to provide monthly current information on these matters. In addition, material has been assembled on the total number of adoption applications which agencies have on their waiting lists and the rate at which these applications are studied.

A booklet containing the provisions of the Ohio law on adoptions and on illegal placements prepared by the State Department of Welfare was given use and distribution. Similarly, the statement of Principles of Adoption Practice as enunciated by the Child Welfare League of America\* has been used by the Committee.

Two statements of adoption policy and practice were prepared at the Committee's request by the executives of local adoption agencies. These indeed have been "trial balloons" for they have not been released in final form. They have stimulated examination of agency practice which resulted in improvements within agencies. Agency executives find that the recommendations of a lay committee carry far more weight with their boards than do their own staff recommendations. The act of preparing the material helped clarify agency relationships and differentiate

\* Adoption Practices, Procedures and Problems, C.W.L.A., 1948.

policies. This material served as the basis for an article prepared by a physician member of the Committee for publication in the local medical association magazine and resulted in better understanding of agency practice by Committee members. From this material too has come Committee discussion of fee charging and the development of the use of fees in adoptions by two agencies.

Another Committee "balloon" was the addressing of all hospital staffs by the physician members of the Committee, with an outline of some of the legal, as well as the social, aspects of good adoption practice. Certain other Committee action served indirectly to improve understanding with key medical groups. The problem of the position taken by agency pediatricians as to the youngest age at which they believe it safe to place infants in adoption homes was discussed with the Pediatric Society. The need for a list of recommended doctors with qualifications as experts in fertility was brought to the attention of the Obstetrical Society. Although the problems were not solved by these groups, their increased understanding about agency procedures in adoption was a real gain.

An additional avenue of interpretation has been developed through the County Prosecutor's office. The Ohio Adoption law provides that placement of children under two years of age is illegal except through a certified child placing agency or through the Juvenile Court. A penalty is stated in the law for anyone other than such organizations participating in any manner in such placements. Enforcement methods are cloudy, as the law is not well written in this regard. It was learned through conference with the Probate Judge and the County Prosecutor that the County Prosecutor did have the responsibility for enforcement. Now anyone hearing of an illegal placement may refer the matter to the Prosecutor, who informs the participants of the law. The parties involved frequently are not aware of the provisions of

the Ohio law on placement and are less interested in making illegal placements once this is known to them. Because of the limited number of adoptions and the still smaller number of adoptions where lawyers are needed, most lawyers have little opportunity to familiarize themselves with the placement and adoption statutes. At the suggestion of the Committee, an article was prepared by the lawyer members of the group, and recently printed in the local Court Index. The appointment of a Codification Commission by the last session of the General Assembly of Ohio stimulated the Committee to suggest certain changes in the Ohio Adoption Law which seem important.

Other communities have found other sorts of methods effective. Here we believe that the sitting down together of a number of intelligent and interested laymen, discussing problems to which no one individual or group has the answer—to which there may well be no answer—is a valid social work process. The professional social workers had no preconceived convictions as to the specific direction the Committee should take. An effort has been made to bring the facts as they were elicited from the adoption agency personnel to the group of interested citizens, each with divergent backgrounds. As long as the group feels that there is a problem of interpretation to be done, and sees constructive activities to improve the adoption situation, it will continue to operate. Hamilton County did not have a black market in June 1948, when the Committee began. It does not have a black market now. We hope we have been instrumental in preventing the development of such a situation. We believe the Committee serves to continually interpret and explain some of the problems of adoption agencies, and of all social agencies, to key laymen, and is helping to improve attitudes and relationships between social work and other professional fields.

#### ADOPTION TRENDS IN HAMILTON COUNTY

##### NUMBER OF ADOPTIONS

	1944*	1945*	1946†	1947†	1948*	1949†
Original placement by social agency.....	48(21%)	57(27%)	112(43%)	110(41%)	123(43%)	137(54%)
Non-social agency placements.....	183	157	146	158	161	115
TOTAL ADOPTIONS.....	231	214	258	268	284	252

##### NON-SOCIAL AGENCY PLACEMENTS

	1944*	1945*	1946†	1947†	1948*	1949†
Number of non-social agency placements.....	183	157	146	158	161	115
Step-parent adopting.....	65	55	68	71	87	86
Other relatives adopting.....	118	102	29	24	25	
INDEPENDENT PLACEMENTS IN NON-RELATIVE HOMES.....			49	63	49	29

##### INDEPENDENT PLACEMENTS

	1946†	1947†	1948*	1949†
Number of independent placements.....	49	63	49	29
Percentage of total adoptions.....	19%	24%	17%	12%

Note 1: It is interesting that adoption of children by step-parents and other relatives represent 38% of total adoptions in 1946, 35% in 1947, and 40% in 1948, 34% in 1949.

Note 2: Of the total adoptions by non-relatives, independent placements represent 30% in 1946, 36% in 1947, and 28% in 1948, 17% in 1949.

\* Figures taken from Probate Court records.

† Figures supplied by child-placing agencies.



## MEDICAL RECORDS AT A GLANCE

With greater understanding of child development, health records in day nurseries have become increasingly meaningful to the teacher, caseworker, nurse, the pediatrician, all of whom are together responsible for planning for the child. Many agencies now find a common problem in making this significant information freely and quickly available to those staff members who must use it.

For example, when a group of children is exposed to a communicable disease, it is imperative that the staff know quickly which children have had that disease. If Johnny steps on a rusty nail, it is important to know when he had his last tetanus shot. Even the periodic medical examination of each child can become a cumbersome procedure when the date of the last examination is buried in the pages of a full record file.

All responsible agencies are also concerned with respecting the confidential nature of records and consequently have developed filing systems and procedures for the use of records that offer such safeguards. The record system described in this article has been developed by the Volunteers of America Day Nursery with a view to providing maximum availability to important health information and with due regard for confidentiality. As Mr. Nolte points out, it is a supplement to the regular health records and in no sense supplants the full developmental history which should be in every child's file. Questions and comments are invited.—D. H. B.

After trying several different types of medical records the Volunteers of America Day Nursery in Milwaukee has arrived at a compact portable file which has a quickly visible system allowing for both the chronological regular health examinations and an

easy method to find which children have had childhood illnesses. We have used the Victor Visible Recorder (Cat. No. 583 F) which comes in a handy book form. This book contains space for 120 children and is used as a supplementary aid to our regular health files.

The children's names are listed on the bottom edge of the front card, so when in the file, there is visible the name of each child, and on the same line, the date of the last complete physical examination. By flipping up the other cards we can view a brief condensation of the pediatrician's findings. When this card is filled, another can be placed on top allowing the staff member ample opportunity to keep a long record.

When the entire column of cards is tilted back, another 3 x 5 file is disclosed. Here we again have the children listed in alphabetical order, but alongside of each name are symbols denoting the various childhood illnesses he has had. The symbols for each disease are kept in the same place on all cards so that they appear as a column when the cards are viewed together. Thus the nurse can run her finger down the list and note which children have not had an illness prevalent at that time in the community. On the face of the card itself is a space for the date of the illness and for the dates of inoculations.

Because of the way the book is made it is necessary to use two separate cards for each child. The same form may be mimeographed on the reverse of the card, so there is no waste in materials.

Another advantage of this filing system is that the cards are easily inserted in the book and then slide up or down in position. This facilitates filing, as the record of a new child can be placed in its proper alphabetical position merely by sliding the other cards apart.

(FRONT)			(BACK)			
GENERAL EXAMINATION		FOLLOW UP CARE				
DATE	FINDING					
2-2-49	GENERAL EXAM—ESSENTIALLY NEG.		STEIN, HERBERT	CP	ME	WC
6-3-49	GENERAL EXAM NEGATIVE. ADVISE EARLY DENTAL CARE.	6-25-49	STONE, MARY ANN		MP	WC
10-5-49	FREQUENT COLDS. MARKED TONSIL HYPER. PX NEGATIVE. ADVISE TONSILLECTOMY.	11-16-49	TAYLOR, MARGARET	CP	ME	R
2-8-50	GENERAL EXAM NEGATIVE—TONSILS OUT.		INOCULATIONS		ILLNESS	
6-14-50	GENERAL EXAM NEGATIVE.		TYPE	DATE	TYPE	DATE
			TRIPLE VACCINE—	1948 (3)	CHICKEN POX	12-4
			(TOXOID, TETANUS, & WHOOP. COUGH)	7-27-49	SCARLET FEVER	6-4
			VACCINATION 7-44	2-8-50	WHOOPING COUGH	
			SCHICK	9-10-49	MEASLES	4-5
					MUMPS	
			T. B. MANTAU	1-18-50	RUBELLA	4-4
			OTHER		OTHER	
TAYLOR, MARGARET 2-49 6-49 10-49 2-50 6-50						
THOMPSON, WILLIAM 3-50 7-50						
TYSON, JANE 11-49 2-50 6-50						

The above names are, of course, disguised.

PAUL NOLTE  
Executive Director, Volunteers of America Day Nursery  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

## BOOK NOTE

MARY IRENE ATKINSON SPEAKING FOR CHILDREN. Cheney C. Jones and Gertrude Springer, Editors. 1949. 192 pp. \$2.50. For students, board members and staff members interested in a bird's eye view of the development in services to children. Available through Child Welfare League of America.

## Correction

In the review of *The Dynamics of Supervision under Functional Controls* by Mrs. Isabelle K. Carter, which appeared in the June issue of CHILD WELFARE, two words were omitted in the third line of the fifth paragraph which distorted the meaning. This sentence should read, "This is of concern because there has been much evidence to show that a feeling of mutuality and of wanting to give without guilt is also a basic human attitude."

## CLASSIFIED AD SERVICE

Insertion of five lines of six words each is made at the minimum rate of \$2.50. For each additional line, or a fraction thereof, the charge is 50 cents. Closing date is the eighth of the month prior to the month of issue. A check should accompany the order.

SAN FRANCISCO Catholic Social Service has openings for professionally qualified child welfare caseworkers. Grade I \$2664-\$3708; Grade II \$2976-\$3708. Apply to General Director, 1825 Mission St., San Francisco 3, Cal.

CHILD WELFARE district consultants and workers, full training and experience; \$3900-\$4620, \$3000-\$3480. Expanding program, high standards. Write Child Welfare Director, Department of Public Assistance, Box 1189, Boise, Idaho.

CASEWORKER private agency giving institution and foster home care for sixty to seventy children a month. Completion of one year graduate work in recognized school required. Prefer person experienced in foster home placement. Write giving age, experience, education, references, salary expected, Berthany Home, 220-11th Ave., Moline, Illinois.

SENIOR CASEWORKER wanted private functional agency providing consultation and casework service to families and operating full time boarding care and day nursery facilities. Agency has institutional receiving home for school aged children as part of foster care program. Minimum requirements M.S.W. and three years supervised experience. Salary \$2800-\$3600 depending on experience. Write Dorothea Gilbert, Children's Service Bureau, 864 Olive St., Shreveport, La.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY for Protestant child care agency in eastern Pennsylvania county. (Member Child Welfare League of America.) Graduate of accredited school of social work. Some supervisory experience required. Salary commensurate with qualifications and experience. Write Miss Ora Pendleton, Children's Aid Society of Pennsylvania, 311 S. Juniper St., Philadelphia 7, Pa.

SUPERVISOR: Professionally trained casework supervisor wanted in a Child and Family Service Agency. Attractive salary dependent upon education and experience. Good personnel practice. Write Director, Lutheran Welfare Service, 210 Summit St., Toledo 4, Ohio.

CASEWORKER (Catholic) for multiple function children's division in small family casework agency. Good supervision. Student training program. Psychiatric consultation, must have Master's Degree. Salary to \$3500. Write: Rev. John R. Hogan, Family Center of St. Clair County, 236½ Huron Ave., Port Huron, Mich.

CASEWORKER professionally trained in children's field. Experience preferred but not necessary. Minimum salary \$2700. Reasonable caseload. Private children's agency in small city with unusual cultural and social opportunities. Children's Aid Society of Warren County, P.O. Box 628, Warren, Pa.

CASEWORKER-SUPERVISOR. Professionally qualified. To supervise two workers and student, and carry small caseload. Work with children in small residential institution and in foster homes. Psychiatric consultation available. Write to Eva Burmeister, Lakeside Children's Center, 2220 E. North Ave., Milwaukee 2, Wis.

ADOPTION WORKER — graduate training and experience, for private, statewide child placing agency. Iowa Children's Home Society, 206 Savings & Loan Bldg., Des Moines 9, Iowa.

SUPERVISOR for Child Placement Department nonsectarian children's agency. Professional training and experience in child placing required. Salary commensurate with experience. Write Nelle Lane Gardner, 20 Olive St., Providence, R. I.

CASEWORKER: Opening for professionally trained caseworker in private nonsectarian children's agency. Beginning salary \$2700 and commensurate with experience. Write Nelle Lane Gardner, 20 Olive St., Providence, R. I.

WOMAN SUPERINTENDENT for a small institution serving 25 teen age girls in a flexible experimental program within an agency providing complete child care services. Applicant must be experienced, capable. Salary range \$275 to \$300 plus maintenance. Write Colorado Children's Aid Society, 314 - 14th St., Denver 2, Col.

CHILD WELFARE SUPERVISOR to supervise and develop child welfare unit in Memphis office, Tenn. Dept. of Public Welfare. Professional training and child welfare experience required. Maximum salary \$4200. Write Personnel Officer, Dept. of Public Welfare, State Office Bldg., Nashville, Tenn.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR small established Crippled Children's Home. Casework and administrative ability necessary. State salary. Martha Washington Home for Dependent Crippled Children, 4515 Drexel Blvd., Chicago, Ill.

SUPERVISOR WANTED for workers carrying intake responsibility for child placement services. Strong multiple service program offers opportunity for professional development and interesting work. Experience in supervision in child placement necessary. Salary commensurate with experience from \$4000. Good personnel practices. Family & Childrens Service, 410 Liberty Ave., Pittsburgh 22, Pa.

OPPORTUNITIES in adoption specialization, general child placement and family casework. Casework openings in large reorganized multiple service agency; good supervision, student training program, psychiatric consultation. Reasonable caseloads and good personnel practices. Beginning salary \$2700 and in accord with experience. Family & Childrens Service, 410 Liberty Ave., Pittsburgh 22, Pa.

HOUSEMOTHER with group work training or experience for Lutheran home for adolescent girls. Excellent opportunity in much needed developing program. \$2400 and complete maintenance. Write Lutheran Children's Friend Society, 244 Citizens Aid Bldg., Minneapolis 2, Minn.

VACANCY in private agency for professionally trained caseworker with some experience. Opportunity for professional development. Limited caseload. Psychiatric consultation. Write Richmond Children's Aid Society, Allison Bldg., Richmond 19, Va.

HERE IS WHAT THE AUTHORITIES SAY  
about

# HUMAN FERTILITY

By EDMOND J. FARRIS, Ph.D., Executive Director  
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In the May issue of *Child Welfare* we told you about this new book which, although published only in April, had already become the most widely discussed book on the subject ever published. Your enthusiastic response to our announcement suggests that you might be interested in the attitude of other professional groups, and of childless couples themselves. Here are a few representative comments:

THE NEW YORK TIMES  
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"... presents the end results of a decade of serious research and offers hope and enlightenment to the many couples who now think themselves sterile."

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